

Scholars and admirers (and I can't see how they can be separated) of the work of Hugo Grotius are familiar with the intriguing figure of the Academic sceptic Carneades who features prominently in both Cicero's *Academica* and the Prolegomena to the Dutch natural lawyer's treatise *de Iure belli ac pacis* of 1625. Quite a few commentators and historians of philosophy (some of them here present) have been intrigued by the question whether or how much of Carneades' theses Grotius would actually be willing to condone. Put briefly, does Grotius see Carneades, the perfect epitome of scepticism in general, as a despicable enemy who has to be defeated, once and for all; or, rather, does he regard him as a formidable adversary in the court room which had to be persuaded?

Less well known maybe is the fact, that by the standards of the printing press in the 17th century, another tract of Grotius' hand, *de Veritate religionis christianae*, was just as or even more popular than his *de Iure belli*. Grotius' *de Veritate* (1627), a Latin prose translation of the original poem in Dutch, the *Bewijs van den waren Godsdienst* (1622), offers an apology of the Christian religion against atheism, paganism, Judaism and the Islam. This work served as a counterweight to the dogmatic *Canones of Dordt* (1619). Against this confessionalism of Calvinistic lore, Grotius placed his undogmatic defence of religion in the sake of a plea for religious tolerance.

Grotius never was a Calvinist. Not only did he rarely quote Calvin (e.g. in his *Ordinum*, in: *Opera Omnia Theologica*, 102b, where he calls Calvin and Beza '*magni alioqui viri*'; and 119b '*magnus ille Calvinus*'), but he also expressed, from his youth onwards, the undisguised sympathy for Calvin's opponents, such as Cassander, Baudouin and Coornhert (*Ordinum*, O.T., 107). Grotius, in fact, rejected a fundamental doctrinal renewal. He understood reformation exclusively as reform, i.e. restoration of the church in the sense of church order (*disciplina*), the abolition of the abuses and superstitions, as well as a check on the uncontrolled growth in liturgical and doctrinal matters. Nor, in fact, was he a true remonstrant. Grotius judged reason and revelation as being of equal worth, whereas the remonstrants, in the last resort, used to place the authority of revelation above that of reason. Grotius also reproached the remonstrants for having too little awe for the authority of tradition.

In the first two decades of the 17th century, the Dutch remonstrants feared, that the counter-remonstrants wanted to impose their strict doctrine of predestination on the church by means of a national synod. The counter-remonstrants resisted all government intervention in church affairs. The Remonstrants were opposed to the Calvinist leanings of the Counter-remonstrants, but they only declined state intervention in matters related to doctrine, not to the public affairs of the church. Accordingly, they feared the coercive measures by the state and turned to government in the expectation that it would guarantee a greater freedom of religious practice.

Presented with confessional pluralism, falling back on the tradition of Erasmus, Grotius rejected the attempts of more dogmatic or less scrupulous contemporaries to re-impose religious unity through either religious dogma's or sheer force. For one, the ancient sceptical approach was introduced into modern thought by Erasmus in his criticism of Luther on the question of whether human beings have free will. He suggested one should suspend judgement on the question and accept the tradition of the Catholic Church (Popkin, 'Scepticism, old and new', in: *The third force*, p.237). This is the stance Grotius happily took in relation to transcendental truths. Furthermore, Erasmus made the important distinction between the fundamentals of faith, which were few in number (and considered necessary for salvation), and the non-essentials, or *adiaphora* (over which dissent was possible). Thus he established the basis structure of the humanist defence of religious toleration.

In addition Erasmus revealed the origin of tolerance in rhetoric, to be precise, in two rhetorical genres, preaching (in its minimal form) and conversation. As to the teacher, he cannot value a heretic's (false) opinion, rather he can only tolerate the heretic in order to persuade him, moderate speech being a more effective means of persuasion than either abusive speech or action by force (Remer, *Humanism and the rhetoric of toleration*, p.7). Conversation, by contrast, concerns a speaker who is engaged in a discussion with one or more others with the goal of arriving at the truth. No one claims certainty.

Erasmus only permitted discussion about non-essential beliefs; and he restricted doctrinal discussion, primarily, to the scholarly elite, excluding the common people. In this paper I would like to that Grotius, too, only permitted discussion about non-essential beliefs, but that in his apologetic treatise, originally written in the vernacular, he also clearly wished to increase his audience. In addition, On the basis of this strategy, Grotius hoped early in life, that his Irenic, minimalistic, strategy could reunite the Protestant nation; later in life, disillusioned, he sought to bring the whole Christian

nation together, Protestants and Catholics alike, which had been divided by the Reformation. Finally, it will be argued, that at the end of his life, he emphasised the *pia antiquitas*, which he then believed to be the norm for Christianity, over dogma. In this sense he turned to a more thick concept of *necessaria*.

What, according to Grotius, can be considered the *adiaphora* of Christian religion? In other words, how much of Christian revelation can be confirmed by human reason alone?

Although Grotius mentions Cicero's name in *de Veritate*, he never even once mentions the Carneades of *de Natura deorum*; nor does he mention Jean Bodin or Isaac de La Prèyere, to mention only two Christian sceptics of his time. In the preface to *de Veritate*, Grotius praises the writings of Sabundus, Vives and Mornay as worthy to be read, handling the matter 'after a subtile philosophical manner'. He nevertheless considered it better to use his own judgement and 'give some freedom' to his mind, for "I know it were but a vanity in mee to goe about to teach others to credit those things that I could not bee perswaded of my selfe" (p.3). Despite of its title and the absence of a formidable opponent, scepticism is always at the background of the treatise. Thus, Grotius speaks of persuading his listeners of the truth of the Christian religion, and at several times he reveals himself to be a moderate sceptic in matters of epistemology. In the second Book of *de Veritate*, Grotius argues that there are several grades of certainty: one in mathematics, another in physics, a third in ethics, and lastly "another kinde when a matter of fact is in question, wherein verily wee must rest content with such testimonies as are free from all suspicion of untruth".

"Now it is the pleasure of God Almighty that those things which he would have us to believe [...] should not so evidently appeare, as those things which are apprehended by sense and plaine demonstration but only be so farre forth revealed as may beget faith, and a perswasion thereof in the hearts and minds of such as are not obstinate" (II.24).

In his work on dogma's, the ceremonies and church government (*De dogmatis ritibus et gubernatione ecclesiae Christianae*, in: *O.O.T.*, III, p. 752ff.), Grotius divides all kinds of dogma's into three categories. First, those dogma's that in and by themselves have sufficient strength to arouse piety and virtuousness in people's soul (the precepts, promises and example of Christ). Second, those dogma's that attribute to Christ the distinction of being the Saviour who has paid retribution by his death for all our sins, who resurrected from his grave and whose Church will live forever. Third, those dogma's that are more confused questions (the Holy Trinity and the two natures of Christ).

In *de Veritate*, Grotius is not willing to call upon divine revelation. Even unaided by revelation, human reason can attest of some of the most important truths, namely that there is a God and what properties He must have. Revelation only makes those truths accessible to human understanding which are either beyond the reach of reason (third category) or very difficult to get. Mornay had divided up the first chapter of his book (*De la vérité de la religion chrestienne contre les athées, epicuriens, païens, juifs, mahumédistes et autres infidèles*, 1581) into two parts: in the first part he proves that there is a God, in the second part he attests that all human beings agree upon this (*consensus gentium*). This bifurcation can also be found in the first paragraph of the first book of *de Veritate*. The first part is devoted to the proof of the existence of a *prima causa*: that all things must have a beginning, that all things have their beginning from some other thing different from themselves, so that there must be some prime cause which never came into existence by some other thing and, hence, must exist by necessity. "And this, whatever it be [...] is that which is meant by divine power or Godhead".

As to the attributes of God, it is clear that there is but one God, first, because God's substance and essence are the same. God is furthermore most necessary and simple; lastly, to suppose that there were two or three Gods, being free and voluntary agents, one would have to attribute to God the power to will contrary things, which is impossible. In the next three sections Grotius proves God's perfection, infinity, eternity, omnipotence, omniscience, and absolute goodness.

Another way to prove that there is some divine power is taken from the consent of all nations, in the ancient and the new world, by civilised and heathen alike (*consensus gentium*). Whereas Mornay brings to the fore a host of quotations derived from classical philosophers and poets, Grotius only mentions Aristotle. In reality, this argument was developed in the school of the Stoa and got its most famous rendering in Cicero's *de Natura deorum*: "the gods exist, because nature herself has imprinted a conception of them on the minds of all mankind" (I.xvi.43).

Apart from human reason and the *consensus gentium*, Grotius depends on the authority of uninterrupted tradition. The historical example of the first Christians, the decisions made by the first Christian Synods, and the history of biblical exegesis, all stand out as proofs and transmitters of the *prima veritas*. Just as custom dictates the common law, so is tradition a touchstone for the interpretation of Scripture (*Annotata ad consultationem Cassandri*, in: *O.O.T.*, III, p. 628). Without tradition, Scripture would be opaque (*'traditio enodat certe Scripturum'*, *Animadversiones in animadversiones A. Riveti*, in: *O.O.T.*, III, p. 648). Hence, tradition, i.e. the *consensus saeculorum et gentium*, denotes the boundaries of free interpretation. Thus, every word in Scripture is confirmed by both reason and tradition.

As to factual evidence in matters of religion, Grotius follows the lead of the early Church fathers. Although no absolute truth can be attained in this way, one has to rely in these matters on reliable and well-established testimonies, preferable of eyewitnesses or unbiased pagan authors.

In his *Against the Academics*, saint Augustine had discerned three kinds of knowledge impervious to sceptical doubts; one of them being logical truths, and in particular disjunctive truths. In order to prove the truthfulness of Christ's resurrection, Grotius reverts to both a host of classical sources and to logical evidence (II.8). Grotius argues as follows. It would be a contradiction to say, that the same man was alive and dead at the same time; "but that a man may be restored from death to life, namely, by the power and virtue of him who first gave life and being unto man" he considers not impossible. Then he continues: "Neither hath it been thought impossible by wise men", alluding to the reports of Plato, Heraclides, Herodotus and Plutarch, who all saw people being restored to life again.

How do revelation and reason relate to each other? According to Grotius, all humans have to strain themselves, so as to make it clear that nothing what we accept by faith is contradicted by reason (*recta ratio*). Where Moses says to the Jewish people: "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his sight", Grotius notes: 'Reason (*sana ratio*) teaches us what is right" (*Annotationes ad vetus Testamentum*, O.T. I, p. 32). Grotius considered not only revelation but also reason as a gift from God to man (*Cf. dIBaP*, Prol. ; also: II.xx.46). In Grotius' opinion, rhetoric is linked up with a certain kind of knowledge not merely with opinion. However, human reason can only go as far as attaining the highest form of probability. The sparkle of light, God permitted man to retain after his Fall is but a torch lightening up in the darkness that surrounds it. Reason can only attest of those truths which pertain to natural instead of revealed religion.

The way Grotius speaks about reason and the way in which the later rationalists and deists do differ greatly, because for Grotius reason is not an autonomous entity. Any discrepancy between reason and revelation is out of the question, for revelation itself is to be considered eminently reasonable. Reason and faith are complementary. Reason perfects the rationality of the Ancients and ultimately determines what is rational in those cases in which the Ancients did either not pronounce themselves at all, or did so vaguely, or contradictorily. The 'novelty' that man receives in belief and revelation is to be considered as a continuation of the perceptions which he, as a rational being, already possesses or could possess by nature. Hence, revelation not only enhances the quality of natural human perception, but above all, is its guarantee. Reason and revelation are in proportion of free will to grace. Absolute certainty is only pledged by heaven. Revelation reveals what matters most in life, the hierarchy of values. Grotius says, for instance, that it is thanks to revelation that Christians consider the worship of God as the highest duty, something of which the Ancients had no notion (*Mel.*, 60.16-20: *Officiorum quae Deo debentur prima esse debet ratio, ut est apud Christianos*).

Grotius' rational methodology is a midway between the entirely historical approach, as conducted by Socinus, and the reformatory appeal to divine inspiration. Grotius did not go as far as Raymundus Sabundus, who said that revelation as superfluous, because reason can learn the truth from nature. In fact, he may have mentioned Sabundus in order to evade the name of Socinus. In defiance of Reformed theology in general, however, he never invokes the inner workings of the Holy Spirit. In reformed theology, not reason but the divine illumination serves as a foundation of *sola scriptura*. Most of the Dutch Remonstrants too subordinated reason to revelation (Haentjes, p.16).

In his apologetic work, Grotius stressed the autonomy and the freedom of the authors of the bible books, but he didn't do away completely with divine inspiration. He confined inspiration only to a few privileged instances. As a matter of fact he restricted divine revelation and intervention to

biblical times only, when God revealed Himself to individuals in order to clarify His Will, just as he used miracles to strengthen people in their faith and to forward religion. Now, true religion is sufficiently revealed in the gospel; God no longer needs to avail Himself of either revelation or direct intervention into the course of things. Man must diligently study the biblical message by means of rational study. In later theological works, Grotius would go as far to say that not all what is written in the Bible is directly inspired. (Heering, p. 129)

Grotius had a lot of confidence in strong government. In the *Ordinum* (IV, 111 a 47-57) he states that a government has the right to interfere in religious quarrels which effect the public safety. The central thesis of *de Imperio* is that the state transcends the church and that the church is subordinate to the state. All this stems from natural law and is confirmed by Holy Scripture, as well as by both older and more recent authorities. Distinguishing external from internal affairs, he argues that the church in her internal affairs is free of the influence and authority of the state; In this respect she is subject only to God; In external affairs, on the other hand, the church is completely subject to the state, whose authority in all these matters is only limited by natural and divine law;

Reducing the necessary tenets of Christianity to a minimum, Grotius leaves some room for public debate in society among the different religious persuasions. In his *Defensio* Grotius argued that a government must allow freedom of doctrine concerning the non-essential questions, but that she cannot allow the same amount of freedom concerning the essential tenets of religion necessary for salvation. In his *Apology* of 1622, in which he defended the policy of the States of Holland preceding the Synod of Dordt, he defended freedom of consciousness for the individual believer. The public affairs of the church, however, resided under the highest authority of the state, the most important restriction being the limitation to a minimum of the necessary doctrines. Only Atheism, of course, was forbidden, and even considered irrational.

In the epilogue of *de Veritate* Grotius points to the relativity of all human knowledge as the medicine (*remedium*) of all religious disputes. Confident as he is of man's capacity to think and behave rationally, combined with his belief in man's inner *appetitus societatis*, Grotius believes debate will strengthen rather than weaken the ties of community. Just as in his *de Iure belli*, Grotius only chose to carve out the general juridical framework for decent communal life, leaving the details to be filled out at will, so in his religious works, Grotius restricts himself to determining only the necessary doctrines for salvation, leaving the secondary tenets open for discussion to the different religious persuasions. In the same vein, however, he reproaches the medieval doctors and the scholastics of trying to establish truth in every detail and imposing it on others. Still, in the end he is confident of man's capacities to know and recognise the truth: "We know now in part onely but the time shall come when all things shall be known most plainly and after perspicuous manner" (VI.11).

In the long run, Grotius was of the opinion, that truth was indissolubly connected with peace. In his poem dedicated to Arminius after his death he use the image of Peace fleeing for the presumptuous, conceited, and quarrelsome people, because the holy truth is the friend of the holy peace (*Mort. J. Arm., in Poemata Collecta*, p. 305: *Ibi satur quiete, gaudii plenus / [...] Hinc tanta bella saeviunt magistratorum / Hinc odia plebis: interim fugit longe / Nec se videndam dimicantibus praebet / Amica sanctae sancta veritas pacis*).

After his failure to achieve a *harmonia confessionum* in 1634, with England and Sweden in the lead, he approves less of the distinction made between the *necessaria* and *non-necessaria* and he shifted his attention to the apostolic and patristic tradition, focusing on the moral worth of dogma's.

Antiquity was for Grotius nothing less than the *aetas aurea* and the *sanior aevus*, because he was of the opinion that it had not only witnessed an earnest reconciliation of the highest cultural values, but at the same time it had effected an optimal structuring of social reality (peace, unity and consensus). In a letter to bishop du Vair of Lisieux (dated 24 June 1621; IV, p.653sq.), he had already compared unfavourably his own time, harassed by unrelenting religious quarrels, and the time of the first Christians. In the same vein he expresses his hope that all conflicts will come to an end and that the Church will regain its initial purity, giving shelter to all different persuasions without forsaking truth. In his *Votum pro pace*, he writes that he found great comfort in the beauty of the Old Church,

which undoubtedly was a Catholic Church, when all Christians were united in just one religious community. This admiration had a long tradition, from Petrarch via Colet, More, Lefèvre d'Étaples, Melancthon, and Cassander, but Grotius thinks the Remonstrants miss such a duly awe for the ancient-old practices of the Church.

Thus, Grotius started to idealise the *pia antiquitas*, antiquity becoming the example and norm for the present. At the same time it seems as if the tolerant attitude towards the *adiaphora* and freedom of consciousness had to give way to a thickening up of the minimalistic standards. In the second half of his life, Grotius becomes more and more convinced that a vital part of religion is made up of an idealised ethics. In one of his letters he writes: It was my intention both to stimulate Christians to love one another (*ad charitatem hortari volui*) for what they have in common, and to induce the others (*caeteris*) to embrace the common Christian confession as well.

At the end of *de Veritate*, Grotius had exhorted his fellow Christians to live a devout and virtuous life, but this seemed only to serve as a means to persuade pagans of the high moral standards of Christianity. For this purpose, he said, we must not only use good language and wholesome speeches, but also the example of good life. "That so the goodness of our master may appear by us his servants, and the integrity of the law by our laudible actions".

Already in the epilogue of *Meletius* (1611), Grotius had summarized his purposes, referring to Meletius: He [Meletius] said: "It seems to me that the principal cause [of conflict] is that the dogmas are declared to be the most essential part of the religion, whereas the ethical precepts are disregarded. Now this is altogether wrong, for dogmas generally subserve ethical precepts and lead to them".

In the course of time, however, he even approved of the fact that those dogma's that could be harmful to society, i.e. peace, were better to be done away with, and that it in this respect it counted more to be a good citizen than a good Christian (*Rivet. Apol. Disc.*, in: *O.T.*, IV, 701 b 32-36: *Pro ius est, bonum civem esse, quam bonum christianum*). Grotius becomes more and more interested in furthering individual *ethos* and building up society to the rational principles he finds in the Ancients and in Scripture (*Cf. Votum pro pace* (1640), IV.676a3-4: *Hostis non sum, nisi eorum dogmatum quae credio noxia aut pietati aut societati humanae*).

According to Grotius, the *raison d'être* of the church cannot be less, but neither more, than the edification of the community along the lines of natural law. Her task is to arouse and stimulate the *appetitus societatis*. She must inspire the community and forge it into a more solid, qualitatively better unity. Thus the church is given a vital pedagogical role in society.

By the end of 1641 Grotius published his *Annotata ad consultationem Cassandri*; shortly afterwards he published his *Via ad pacem ecclesiasticam* (1642). What counted for him was always the visible church, the church as a body, not in any mystic sense but in the sense of an organic and concrete community. He defined the soul of the church as *concordia* (*de Imperio*, VI.9). Grotius was even more explicit when he declared: Those who seek to further peace among Christians, are obliged to destroy those dogma's which disturb political peace. It would seem that only a jurist or a statesman could speak in this manner, not a theologian. For a theologian knows that the church will never be confined to tangible or ethical visibility, and that it is not *concordia* either which represents its profoundest being, but the Holy Spirit.

In *de Iure belli ac pacis* (1625), his treatise on natural law, Grotius had made a clear distinction between what natural law, as a minimum standard of morality, required and what Christian religion required. In striving after the ideal of individual perfection, however, Grotius seems to come very close to the moral theory of the Dutch humanist Coornhert, which had always identified the Golden Rule of the gospel with natural law. Significantly, Grotius understood the words of Matthew 19:21: "If thou wilt be perfect [...] come and follow me", to be saying: 'If you want to be sacred' or 'If you want to be a true and sincere person' (Haentjes, p.49).

It seems appropriate to round off this section with an apologetic eulogy made by Grotius of the civilising influence on the world exercised by the Christian religion: "And if Christian life would answer to its name all over the world, we would live in a truly Golden Age, without wars, without quarrels, without poverty, in the greatest peace and harmony".

In speaking so liberally about religious dogma's, Grotius placed himself on the far side of the moderated Christian humanists, even among his contemporaries, but he never became a radical sceptic

as to the truth of the Christian religion itself. Grotius' theological opponents found it unacceptable that Grotius, in the wake of the later Stoa, should declare ethics to be the centre, indeed the essence, of philosophy, ruling out or declaring immaterial a great part of metaphysics and Christian dogma. They saw the truth about God, His freedom and grace, threatened by this compelling reduction and restriction to what is rational and ethical. Indeed it was because of this reduction that Grotius was accused of Socinianism, in spite of the fact that he himself carried on a heated polemic with Socinus (*De satisfactione*, 1617). Probably Grotius was more of a Socinian than he himself was prepared to admit.

In *de Veritate* Grotius considered pagan religions not as completely worthless or redundant. He did deem them worthy of investigation, but he did not go as far as Jean Bodin in his *Heptaplomeres* ...to credit all different religious persuasions with the same amount of truthfulness. The pagan religions were no *contradictio in terminis*, but they were still full of erroneous beliefs. The most deviant forms of worship Grotius could think of were animism, polytheism, and astrology. Nor did Grotius feel any empathy for the deification of some superhuman creatures as Hercules in Greece or Romulus in Rome, or of virtues as justice, temperance or courage. Most appalled was Grotius by those pagans who erected altars in veneration of sicknesses or meteorological powers.

In the Preface to his edition of Stobaeus' *Dicta poetarum* (1623), Grotius conceives of religious truth as unwrapping itself in the course of history. In a three-step evolution of increasing veracity, Grotius refers to the classical poets, philosophers and, finally, Jesus, the Christian prophets and the apostles. Grotius believed that the wisdom and perceptions of the greatest minds of pagan Antiquity were to be regarded as a preparation for, and an anticipation of, the truth that Christ was to reveal.

Judaism was closest to the Christian religion. Divine revelation was bestowed only partly on the Jews, whereas it found its fulfilment in the gospels. In Book V of *de Veritate*, Grotius deemed the Jewish laws inferior to the commandments of the gospel for two reasons: because of the inferior rewards promised by the Jewish religion and because of their sacrifices. The rewards promised by the Jewish religion were all related to mundane life not to any afterlife. Moreover, all the Hebrews were desirous of many rites and ceremonies, but they paid no attention to the inner faith. Hence, that part of the Jewish law, the necessity whereof was taken away by Christ, contained nothing that was honest in its own nature, but consisted of things that were indifferent in themselves and, consequently were not immutable.

Decorum

The task Grotius set himself in the original Dutch text of the *Bewijs*, which was written when Grotius was enduring a lifelong imprisonment at Loevestein Castle after his conviction by the Synode of Dordt (1619), was “to make it appear that Christian religion is the most true and certain religion of all the rest” (II.1). Assessing the purpose and scope of *de Veritate* is necessarily determining its audience. In contrast with Spinoza, who offers us little help in resolving the vexing and persistent problem of his intended audience for the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (TTP), Grotius seems to be quite clear about the intended readership.

“For my purpose was to benefit all my country-men, but specially sea-faring-men, that they might not (as too many do) lose and mispend their time. Wherefore beginning with the commendation of our country, which for the skill and diligence in navigation excels the rest, I exhorted them to use that art, not only for their own proper gain and commodity, but also for the propagation of true Christian religion” (Preface, p.4).

Although the exact title of the *Bewijs* had not been fixed from the beginning, it cannot be doubted that Grotius wanted to present his apologetic work as an introduction to the true Christian faith. It is certain though that for some time the working title of the manuscript was *Geloofs voorberecht*. His brother Willem described the poem in his diary as *Inleydinge van het geloof (de Initiis fidei carmina)*. Grotius himself referred to the work in his letters as *Isagoge fidei*.

The intention to broaden the scope of his readership was certainly not foreign to Grotius. Already during his youth he had composed several poems in Dutch, not one of them, however, intended for publication. In one of his earliest treatises destined for publication, the *Parallela* (a treatise composed around 1601-2, which circulated among friends and relatives but was never published) he even dedicated a whole section to the assets and beauty of the Dutch language. During his imprisonment in The Hague and Loevestein, Grotius wrote several religious poems in vernacular and a work on jurisprudence (*Inleidinghe*).

The didactic nature of the Dutch poem facilitated its posterior rendering in Latin prose. The Latin text is shorter, as can be expected from a translation of a vernacular language into Latin, but it is better documented. Most adaptations and revisions in the Latin edition consist of corrections in the text and additional quotations derived from classical literature. Grotius hardly ever the line of argumentation.

According to Aristotle in his *Poetics*, the didactic poem did not belong to poetry as such. In humanistic circles, however, didactic poetry was in high esteem.

According to Cicero, philosophical writing is an occupation for retirement, a patriotic duty, and a consolation in his bereavement (*de natura deorum*, I.4).

In the *Parallela*, Grotius calls the art of poetry the most adequate way of spiritual relaxation (II.17.57: ‘*etiam mediocriter doctis in Poesi optime interquiescit animus*’). It may be that in writing *de Veritate* Grotius had partly the purpose to appease his own mind, such a short time after his conviction, and the overall aim of the work was clearly to instruct the initially Dutch audience and to persuade non-believers, but besides an apologetic purpose, the Dutch *Bewijs* may well have had a more political purpose. In the Dutch text, for instance, the exploits of the Dutch are much more extolled than in the Latin equivalent. In more than one occasion, Grotius showed off his patriotism. Already in his *Oratio in laudem navigationis*, he had connected the Christian religion with the art of navigation; and many poems written during his youth reveal Grotius’ patriotism (Eyffinger,). With the *Bewijs*, however, he may have had two specific aims: one, to rehabilitate himself after his conviction in Dordt (1619); and two, to convince the lower strata of society, generally associated with Calvinism, of the orthodoxy of his beliefs (or at least to persuade them of the fact that his own convictions did not assail those of the Calvinist creed).

During his imprisonment Grotius wrote several other poems with a didactic purpose. Just after his arrest for instance, he wrote a catechism in Dutch verse for his daughter Cornelia. In this work he dwelt, except on (...) baptism, on almost all the Christian doctrines and ceremonies which can be found in the Catechism of Heidelberg and the Dutch Reformed Confession. Again, may this have been a strategy to prove his religious orthodoxy.

A comparison of the original Dutch poem with the Latin translation in prose does not reveal a real change of *decorum*. At times, Grotius, in *de Veritate*, is only a little more explicit about his sources. Thus, Mornay, Sabundus and Vives are not called by their names in the *Bewijs* but only referred to in general as 'meenich edel geest' (quite a few noble minds). Although the actual text of *de Veritate* is a comprised version of the Dutch poem, Grotius adds, with every new edition, new quotations derived from an array of classical sources. The line of argument, however, is hardly ever changed. Apparently Grotius was aware of the fact, that the two works were direct at two different audiences, but this fact in itself never induced him to be more doctrinal in the Dutch poem or to show himself more sceptical or critical in the Latin version. We know, for example, that during his stay in Paris, Grotius got acquainted with the *Heptaplomeres* of Jean Bodin and the La Preyères

If we are looking for a religious work with a more critical stamp, we have to look at his commentaries to the Old and New Testament (*Annotationes ad VT et NT*) written in the second half of his life. Here we can find the beginning of rational bible criticism.

Faithful to the Erasmian tradition he had picked up at the University of Leyden (although Grotius' teacher Scaliger was more critical than the Dutchman; Heering, p.131), Grotius considered the literal meaning of the bible text the most accurate one. He rejected any allegorical reading of texts, but once and a while he does revert to the *sensus typologicus* of a text himself, for instance to predictions in the Old Testament foreshadowing the coming of Christ (Deut. 18:15; Jes. 1:1; Jer. 23:4 Hosea 11:1; Zach. 4:6). Grotius does, however, make a distinction between an exegetical and an apologetic explanation of a text. When, for example, in Isaiah 9:9 the birth of a son is foretold, Grotius says that this prediction relates to Hiskia. In a comment to Isaiah 11:1, however, when the praise of Hiskia is sung, Grotius says that this praise is due to the Messiah, but, only in a *sensus sublimior*. In his role as an apologist we saw that he placed this *sensus sublimior* in the foreground to the detriment of the *sensus primarius*. In *de Veritate*, however, much more stress is laid on the *sensus sublimior*, i.e. the fact that Jesus was the Messiah and that his immanent coming was foretold by the Jewish prophets.

Next to the grammatical method, Grotius also applied the historical method. As we saw in *de Veritate*, Grotius uses most of the time external historical evidence to corroborate biblical narration, but in his *Annotations* he also makes inquiries concerning the time and the circumstance in which the bible books were written. Thus, he considered the Old Testament a pure Jewish document, most of the predictions of the prophets relating to the rise and fall of the Jewish state itself.

Grotius contested too that Moses would have written the bible book of Genesis and the other books of the Pentateuch without having recourse to any other sources. Moses, he argued, had had many sources to his avail, which had their origins in surrounding countries. In *de Veritate*, Grotius says that the Greek philosophers and even the Roman lawyers have benefited greatly from the works of Moses.

As to the New Testament, Grotius that John's visionary predictions in Revelations concerned only the first century or so after Christ's death. Chapters four to ten described the persecution of the Christian community by the Jews; chapters 12 to twenty related the persecution of Christians by the Romans; and chapters twenty and twenty two described the bliss and prosperity of the Christian community under the reign of Constantine the Great. Accordingly, Grotius saw emperor Nero, not the Pope, as the Anti-Christ.

Grotius' criticism did not extend so far as to unravel real anomalies. He writes that although man have questioned the authenticity of some of the books, the overall meaning of it was one and could not be doubted. He admitted that some of the historical books contained contradictions, but he maintained that only the nucleus of the New Testament was sufficient to derive the tenets of true religion.

Place of Grotius in his time

In 17th-century England, orthodox meant adherence to the propositions expressed by the first four church councils. This criterion was established by Queen Elizabeth, when she instituted the High Commission, the court that regulated ecclesiastical matters (Martinich, *The two gods of Leviathan*, p.2).

As Martinich (p.3) rightly argues, standard views (as sociological statements) may or may not be orthodox. To question the authorship of some books of the Bible was neither unprecedented nor proof of heterodoxy. Both Luther and Erasmus cast doubt on the authorship of some of the New Testament books. About Grotius' belief, that the Pentateuch is a redaction or compilation from earlier sources, and that few if any miracles can be credited after the Testamental period, none of these views is unorthodox, even though they were non-standard in the 17th century. Most of Grotius' views, however, were standard 16th- and 17th-century Reformation views. Hobbes' view, that angels and maybe even God were bodies, on the other hand, was unorthodox; yet his determinism, for instance, which is logically tied to Calvin's doctrines of predestination and belief in the omnipotence of God, was a commonly held view.

Hobbes has been labelled an epistemological, moral or religious sceptic, or, at least, some aspect of his thought (e.g. nominalism) has been claimed to be a form of scepticism. If Hobbes does not seem to have been part of the sceptical crisis going on around him, he was nonetheless accused of being a sceptic, not in the sense of a Pyrrhonian sceptic, nor a follower of Montaigne; rather Hobbes was accused of being a sceptic about religious convictions.

Much of what Hobbes says about religion, in fact, appears to be negative. However, on several occasions Hobbes says that religion is one of the two things that are distinctive to human beings, reason being the other. He defines religion as 'fear of power invisible, feigned [constructed] by the mind, or imagined from tales publicly allowed'. This definition is neutral on the issue of whether any religion is true or not. In *de Cive*, Hobbes defines superstition as 'The fear of invisible things, when it is severed from right reason'; in *Leviathan* he defines 'superstition' in a quite different and deeply relativistic way: 'superstition is religion not allowed'.

Notwithstanding the objectionable implications in his definition of religion ('tales publicly allowed'), Hobbes' explicit definition of true religion is innocuous: 'fear of power invisible in which the power imagined, is truly such as we imagine'. Hobbes asserts that 1) people have no idea of God; and 2) that people have no knowledge of God's nature or essence; but denies that 3) people have no knowledge of God. Hobbes' position is quite in line with the tradition of Christian theology.

Hobbes does not revert to the *consensus gentium*; Instead, Hobbes states that the source of religion, which is peculiar to humans, is the desire to learn the causes of things. Often the cause is visible, and when it is a person will fear it or not; but when the cause is invisible, a person will invariably fear it. Belief in the true God, however, is derived from a straightforward inference from observable effects to an invisible cause. The quest for the end of the chain of causes and effects (the first cause) is characteristic, not of superstitious persons, but of the scientific mind.

Although Hobbes is willing to affirm that God is literally infinite, omnipotent, and eternal, there is no more that humans can know about God's nature. In a Calvinist vein Hobbes argues, that human beings are in such a deprived state that it was almost impossible for men, without the special assistance of God, to avoid both rocks of atheism and superstition. Yet other views that he espouses seem to commit him to holding that much more can be said about God, such as, that He is the author of the laws of nature and that He revealed Himself to various people in the Bible. According to Hobbes, most talk about God is not epistemological but honorific. Nonetheless, Hobbes' own justification for much talk about God seems to blur the line between honour and truth.

Hobbes is part of a tradition of intellectuals trying to save religious belief by immunising it against the deadly arguments of reason. According to Erasmus, reason can be no guide to religion. Instead, humans must rely upon an authority to specify what religious beliefs ought to be held. Hobbes' view concerning the relation between faith and reason also contributes to an erosion of the credibility of religion. His own reservations about the power of reason, however, stem from his Calvinist background. Calvin denigrated the ability of human reason to know anything about God's nature, owing to human sinfulness. In addition, Hobbes saw that the discoveries of modern science,

proceeding solely on the basis of reason, were contradicting biblical doctrines. Since he was committed to both science and religion, he had no choice but to make a clear distinction between the two. Faith and belief are both similar to and different from both judgement and science. Like judgement, faith is not conditional but categorical; like science it is certain. However, unlike science, faith is not based upon the definitions of words but upon the trust or authority of the person from whom the faith is received.

Nevertheless, Hobbes points out that reason is to be used in the purchase of justice, peace and true religion. Since God has given humans reason as a tool for discovering true religion, there cannot be any contradiction between the propositions of faith and the propositions of reason. Hobbes did not say, however, that all the propositions of faith can be proven by reason or even completely understood; Many things are above reason, but nothing against it.

Concerning the class that exceeds reason, Hobbes takes the sensible line that they are to be accepted without 'sifting out a philosophical truth by logic, of such mysteries as are not comprehensible, nor fall under any rule of natural science'. Propositions of this kind must be assigned not to reason but to the will. Hobbes' explicit relegation of certain propositions or religion to the will was an attempt to protect them from an unjustified encroachment or assault by reason.

Contrary to Erasmus and Grotius, Hobbes is not willing to hark back to an idealised past. In the *Behemoth* he argues, that the university's potential for causing rebellion arose from a single source, namely, the prominence of the ancient languages in the curriculum, for this handed the students the keys to a potential harmful ideological arsenal. Hobbes often laboured to pluck out the pagan elements of Greek philosophy and mythology that had been intertwined with biblical doctrines. He says the church fathers are responsible, for they began to mingle the decrees of Holy Scripture with the sentences of heathen philosophers. According to Hobbes, Jewish religion had originally been utterly materialistic before Greek philosophy had spoiled it with lending it a spiritual hue. The infection of Christian religion with Aristotelian concepts, he considered almost even more damaging to Christian religion.

The sceptical element in both the moral and religious case lies in Hobbes' conviction that there is no rational or historical criterion of knowledge in these areas. Since it is necessary for social reasons that moral and religious decisions be made, not debate but the sovereign makes the decision (arbitrarily from the point of view of rational evidence for the decision) and the decision is to be accepted by the populace as if it were true. Hobbes saw that the sceptical attacks undermined any human being's claim to know absolutely or definitely any truth claim. Every alleged claim could be disputed. This would lead to the world being a debating society; Hobbes, at least once, at the end of *de Cive*, realized that the so-called faith would have to be acceptance of authority and the only recognizable authority was a civil one. The truth became political as the only means of settling arguments and preserving the peace (Popkin, 'Hobbes an scepticism', I and II, in: *The third force*, Leiden 1992).

According to Hobbes, there is no conflict between obeying God and obeying man; For it is God's command that citizens obey their sovereign; He says, that all that is necessary to salvation is contained in two virtues: faith in Christ, and obedience to laws.

Hobbes' rejection of humanist premises entailed a rejection of the humanist defence of toleration. Thus he exploited the term 'fundamentals of faith', not to broaden the area of toleration but to neutralise any religious claims against the sovereign. The sovereign himself must look to the interest of the commonwealth to decide whether or not to be tolerant.

The critique Hobbes levelled against humanism and the humanist defence of religious toleration was anticipated by at least one humanist: Jean Bodin (p.10); He, like Hobbes, feared the anarchic consequences of religious rhetoric and debate but instead of abandoning humanist toleration, Bodin upheld religious conversation and its rules of *decorum*. Unlike Grotius, Bodin could accept each speaker persisting in his or her original beliefs, including non-Christians in the conversation. Thus the advocates for each religion could claim the right to be tolerated, because they represented separate aspects of a greater truth. Moreover, although the argument from conscience was not Bodin's principal justification of toleration, he makes use of it more than most other humanists. The only exception Bodin made in his defence of conscience is atheism. (Gary Remer, *Humanism and the rhetoric of toleration*).

Appendix

As to the Book of Job, which has lent the titles to two of Hobbes' books (Leviathan and Behemoth), Grotius considered the person of Job as a historical not an allegorical figure, which had lived somewhere in Arabia. He meant that the writer of the story had had the intention to provide the Jews, who had just returned from exile, with a pious example. If, in the future, they would cling to the veneration of only one God and live piously, the whole Jewish nation would fare well. In the *Bewijs*, but not in *de Veritate*, Grotius mentions both Leviathan and Behemoth in the same line:

“Wanneer haer Christus heeft het ware light gebraght / De volgers synes leers beloovende te geven / Een eeuwich, ongequelt, volkomen, saligh leven / En dat niet alleen voor 's menschen halve deel / Gelyk als is de ziel, maer voor den mensch [...] Die vreugd en sal niet zijn aen eenen disch geseten / Van den Leviathan of Behemoth te eten / gelyk den synen leert de vleeschelyke Rabbijn” (II, p.41).

Grotius though uses both names in a quite innocent sense. He merely states, that after Christ has brought his light (bliss) to earth, true Christians will not delight in eating both Leviathan and Behemoth representing the devil (as Jewish religion teaches), but both his body and soul will beget eternal life in paradise (cf. C. Schmitt, *Der Leviathan*, p.18)